

## CHAPTER XX.

RIGHT BANK OF THE SPEY, FROM FOCHABERS TO  
THE SEA—RILL OF TYNET—BURN OF BUCKIE,  
AND CULLEN RIVER.

THE damage done to the plantations and ducal grounds of Gordon Castle was very great. One breach of 186 yards was made in the park wall, which was likewise demolished in many other places, and free access being thus permitted to the flood, it tore up a number of beautiful trees, and spread over the grounds to within 125 yards of the Castle. The inundation covered the whole lower part of the park, and the cultivated lands beyond, destroying the plantations and crops in that direction, and utterly ruining large fields of grass, turnips, and corn, levelling the walls and other fences, ploughing up and scarifying the ground in some places, and covering it with sand and gravel in others. The deluge then burst over the plain of Bellie, annihilating the whole crop, and much injuring the greater part of the land.

Mr James Scott's house, being situated on ground rather more elevated than the surrounding plain, was filled with guests who had fled from their own houses to what was deemed a place of undoubted security. It was soon hemmed in by the water, however, but Mr Scott had taken the precaution to build up the door with sods, by which means the interior remained dry after it was several feet deep on the outer walls; but,

as its vertical pressure increased, it gradually began to force itself through the sand under the foundations of the house, and burst up in springs through the floor. There were no less than 24 persons in the company, yet all their exertions were unequal to subdue their insidiously obtrusive enemy, to which they were compelled to yield up the ground floor, and to take refuge up stairs. In the morning, the people who saw their hazardous situation sent for boats. A ship's yawl was first procured, but, after it was taken to the spot, it was found too small to encounter the flood that raged widely between the shore and the house. A large boat was then brought with great difficulty from the fishing station called *The Tugnet*, launched, rowed with considerable risk to the house, and the prisoners were taken from the windows into it, and safely landed. Mr Scott alone remained to watch over his infirm mother, of 85 years of age, who was in too delicate a state of health to be removed. A signal was agreed on, in the event of his considering the house in danger of falling; but it was not found necessary to employ it. The poor old woman did not long survive the flood. Mr Scott's horses and cows stood half covered with water, the cows bellowing with terror, and the calves, pigs, and sheep, swimming about like ducks. But this description applies equally to the whole farms in this neighbourhood. Early on the morning of the 4th, about half-a-dozen of hares were observed in a little elevated spot in front of Mr Scott's house, completely encircled with water. The creatures were seen running round, making the wildest efforts to escape; but, alas! the water continued gradually to narrow the little space that was left to them, until it finally closed over them and swept them away. Many thousand rabbits and

hares were destroyed among the furzy patches of ground. Twenty-five large English sheep were carried off from the farm of Burnside.

In the Milltown of Bogmoor, the houses had five or six feet of water in them. I talked to John Geddes, a poor man who rents a small patch of land on Bogmoor. With a face the picture of woe and misery, he was scraping from the sand a few straggling heads of oats, little better than chaff as to substance, of a dark colour when rubbed out, and so filled with dust and dirt, that I certainly think even rats and mice would have refused them. He told me that the whole extent of plain between him and The Tugnet is occupied by people who hold little possessions like his own, and the description given of his crop may serve for the whole. Yet this is all they have to look to as a year's provision for themselves and their beasts! What a sum of misery would be here, were it all reckoned up! Yet John Geddes was bearing his affliction with a spirit not unbecoming a Christian; and his neighbours were no less patient under the chastisement they had received.

At Carsemoor the water was 9 feet deep and upwards. It carried off a house and its furniture, and all the stacks of corn. A man I met with there, told me that the flood came upon them quite unexpectedly, "i' the middle o' the dark night, an' they had eneugh ado to escape awa', by widin' up to their middles, in an awfu' terrification." One young man was roused from his slumbers by the water rushing into his bed. He leapt out into it 3 feet deep, among floating furniture. On looking abroad from the door, and beholding the strange and frightful deluge, he alarmed his wife, and each snatching up a blanket and a naked

child, they, with no other clothes than they had slept in, entered the water together, and waded in the darkness of night through the flood, where they frequently sank into holes that threatened to drown them and the trembling innocents they carried. After struggling thus for more than a quarter of a mile, they providentially reached Dallachy in safety. And fortunate it was that they risked this desperate attempt to escape, for their house was swept away soon after they left it, and everything they possessed in the world went with it.

Near them lived Alexander Gray and his family, and as the place was at so great a distance from the river as to remove all suspicion of its ever coming there, they had gone to bed, and were sleeping soundly, when Mrs Gray, as she said herself, "wus waukened by a' the things i' the hoose *knap, knap, knappin'* against each other through the floor." Alarmed by the water coming into her bed, she stretched out her hand to rouse her husband; but his place was vacant. She screamed with afright, and jumped into the water, where her daughters soon joined their cries with hers. Everything was dark, there was no means of procuring a light, and consternation and clamour prevailed. They called on old Gray, but in vain. They listened, and nothing reached their ears but the howl of the tempest, and the flood roaring around the house, as if loudly telling them what his fate had been, and what their own was soon likely to be. One of the sons, who had been employed in herring-fishing, had gone very tired to bed, in an apartment somewhat removed from the house. He was awakened, as he said, "by them *skellachin'* i' the main hoose. I faund the pillow dooblin' round my head w<sup>7</sup> the jaw o' the water," said he; "I louped oot,

an' swattered to the door; an' the first thing I saw, when I cam' round the corner, was a great lump o' meal oot o' the meal-kist, which the water had turned ower, an' then I kent that a' was vrang i' the hoose."

Whilst the mother and her daughters were pouring forth lamentations for the fate of old Gray, interrupted only by shrieks when that which impended over themselves more immediately pressed itself upon them, the family of another son, who lived in an adjoining cottage, made their way to them with great difficulty, from a yet more imminent pearl; and the cries of the whole were redoubled. The flood was still gaining on them, and the miserable women were obliged to stand on the beds, and to hold up the naked children, as well as they could, to keep them from being drowned. The son, brave though he was, had no means of doing anything either for himself or for those he held so dear. He wished to attempt to get to the stable, resolving, that if he should find the old mare still safe, he would endeavour to breast the stream with her. But Mrs. Gray had already lost a husband, and the rest a father, and they now clung about a son and a brother, to prevent what must have ended in his certain destruction. And yet, what but certain destruction awaited them all? The waters were still rising, and every hope seemed to be extinguished.

It was now three o'clock in the morning. Their situation was becoming every moment more critical, and they were expecting the arrival of that awful period that was to sweep them into eternity, when the gladdening sound of other human voices than their own came upon them. They listened eagerly, and old Sanders Gray's well-known tongue was heard calling to them, and cheering them; and in a short time the

dripping women and naked children were dragged on board a boat. Sanders had had some rather strange adventures. He, too, had been disturbed by the "*knaf, knaf, knapping*" of the furniture, but somewhat earlier than the rest. Surprised at the sound, and at the gurgling noise that came about the bed, he arose to ascertain what was the cause, and immediately found himself standing in two feet of water. He had the wonderful presence of mind to remain silent, and to allow his wife to sleep on, till he could assure himself of the real extent of the danger. Quietly slipping on part of his clothes, he gently opened the outer door, and was astonished to see nothing but water as far as the darkness allowed his eyes to penetrate. Being a resolute man, he at once determined to make the best of his way to land, and thence to The Tugnet, to procure a boat for the relief of his family. Wading, with some difficulty, to the stable, therefore, he extricated his old mare Meg, mounted her, and, without a moment's hesitation, dashed boldly into the rough stream that opposed him. Meg was instantly swept from her footing, and carried rapidly down. But Sanders kept her head to the stream, and both master and mare being of stern stuff, they struggled toughly against it, till, after swimming above 100 yards, Meg again recovered her footing, and waded with her rider to the shore. So deep was the stream, that Sanders swam over a wall 4 feet high; and, on being asked how he had done this, "Guid kens!" replied he; for trowth I ne'er faund it i' my road."

Sanders had a rich harvest of golden hopes swept away on that woful night. Never did the poor man's *croft* give promise of a more abundant crop, and he did not gather one boll of good grain where he ex-

pected 40. He lately thrashed 52 shocks of oats, from which he obtained 3 pecks of dressed corn, of the most wretched description. But this, as I have already shewn, is but a sample of the whole crop hereabouts. His potatoes, invaluable in a poor man's family, and his turnips, are quite gone—his furniture spoiled—his out-houses levelled—and his little all destroyed.

The families of Bogmoor were removed from their houses by a boat; but there was no case of personal danger among them. One woman, who was snugly tucked into bed with her husband, being suddenly disturbed by the crying of a child, jumped out of bed,—“Eh!—Oh!—Ech!—Echeigh!” cried she, with a long-drawn sigh,—“Eh! guid preserve me, I'm up to the hanches in boilin' water!” Coming directly, “hissing hot,” from her bed, the sudden chill she experienced thrilled through every fibre like fire, and produced this whimsical exclamation.

I have no means of ascertaining the number of families rendered destitute on this side of the embouchure of the Spey. They must be very numerous. His Grace the Duke of Gordon has given in his losses at £16,494.

After leaving the Spey, the natural rampart of water-worn pebbles I have elsewhere noticed, runs regularly along the shore towards Port-Gordon; not far from which place the small rill of Tynet has undermined and ruined a salmon-house, belonging to the stake-net fishery, though standing high upon the bank, and most substantially built. (Plate LV.)

In riding eastwards, along the turnpike road, we found the bridge over the Burn of Buckie gone; and on reaching Cullen House, we learned that the stream which runs through the magnificently wooded glen

there had done a world of mischief. In a beautiful spot, nearly encircled by one lovely link of the little river, was situated one of the most fairy flower-gardens I ever beheld. It was swept over by the flood, and covered with ruinous wreck. But the same potent spells which originally called it into being, had already restored it, and no eye could have supposed that so fell a devastation had ever visited it.

